Regulating South Carolina's Utilities

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PSC*news*

Public Service Commission of South Carolina

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Night Hearings Provide Key Input in Water Cases

The public hearing is the main venue in which Public Service Commissioners determine the facts surrounding a particular docket.

Public hearings are particularly important in cases where a regulated utility is seeking to increase the rates and charges for the services it provides. The Public Service Commission has a long tradition of providing opportunities for broad public input in cases of that nature. Sometimes that means taking the hearing to where those who will be affected by a rate increase request live.

Hearings away from the Commission's office in Columbia are usually held in the early evening and last until all interested persons have had the opportunity to be heard. These "night hearings", which often involve water rate cases, may be scheduled at the initiative of the Commissioners or requested by affected customers or their legislators.

Because the information gathered at night hearings is part of the hearing record, persons speaking at night hearings testify under oath and may be examined by the Commissioners and the attorneys representing the parties to the case.

The PSC will be holding a series of night hearings between mid-April and early May to allow customers of *Carolina Water Services* and *Lake Wylie Community Utilities* to provide input for consideration by the Commissioners. All of these night hearings will begin at 7:00 P.M.

— Phil Riley

NIGHT HEARINGS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED INCLUDE:			
Carolina Water Systems			
Monday	April 18	Fort Dorchester Elementary School	Summerville
Wednesday	April 20	Town of Irmo Council Chambers	Irmo
Tuesday	April 26	Rivers Hills Community Church Family Life Center	Lake Wylie
Monday	May 2	Oak Grove Elementary School	Lexington
Lake Wylie Community Utilities			
Tuesday	April 12	York Technical College	Rock Hill

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MaryJane Cooper, *Editor*

We're on the Web
www.psc.sc.gov

From the Chair . . . . . *Randy Mitchell*

As everyone knows, the PSC is going through big changes this year. Act 175 restructured the agency, creating a quasi judicial body that hears cases involving the state's investor owned utilities.

With the PSC's new mission, we have implemented the Code of Judicial Conduct. Three of our members have attended the National Judicial School, and the rest plan to complete the school within the next year.

The PSC has held major hearings this year involving electric rates and telephone regulation. We have a number of pending cases involving water and sewer rates, and we have scheduled night hearings around the state in order to hear from the public about these cases.

We continue to strive for efficiency, and have begun to appoint special hearing examiners in order to better handle our caseload. The PSC will also open a series of generic dockets in the next few months in order to stay abreast of developments in our dynamic regulatory environment.

I deeply appreciate the help and cooperation that we have received from the legal community, ORS, and the legislature. I am glad to report that the PSC has embraced change, and that it has been for the better.

— *Randy*

In Brief . . . *Charlie Terreni — Chief Clerk/Administrator*

PSC Finalist for Palmetto Pillar Award

Over the past months at the PSC, we have worked to make the regulatory process more open and accessible to the public, to industry, and the legal community.

The PSC's Docket Management System ("DMS") is emblematic of our commitment to providing timely and accessible information to those who need it. DMS is a true, cutting edge, internet based, records systems which allows public access to pleadings and testimony from home and office PCs. No more calling to ask for copies, just click and print.

We will soon expand our *e-filing* pilot project and dispense with paper filing of pleadings altogether. Because of these initiatives, I am proud to announce that the PSC is now a finalist for the prestigious Palmetto Pillar Award for technological innovation in business and government. We will keep you informed of our progress on DMS, *e-filing,* and other projects. In the meanwhile, feel free to see them yourself by visiting www.psc.sc.gov.

We are also working with ORS to design an *e-filing* system for tariffs and annual reports. When this system is in place, company tariffs and reports will be accessible by computer in much the same way as hearing records are on DMS. Look for a rollout of this system next year.

— *Charlie*

JOSEPH MELCHERS — *Chief Counsel*

JOSEPH MELCHERS joined the PSC Commission Staff as Chief Counsel on January 31, 2005. He comes to us from the Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough law firm where he was a partner with a background in environmental, litigation and toxic torts practice.

Joseph received a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Georgia Southern University and a Juris Doctor from the USC School of Law. Joseph and his wife Kathy have been in Columbia since 1985 and for the past 5½ years have lived in Lexington. Kathy stays busy home-schooling their six children — Michael 17, Sarah 15, Benjamin 13, Nathan 10, Samuel 8 and John Adam 4.

The Melchers family is happily involved with Lexington Presbyterian Church and spends their leisure time enjoying baseball, hunting and horses.

— Nina Gates

OUR MAN IN KABUL

"There are a million Toyota taxis. Not one stop light or stop sign in a city of 3 million - there are traffic cops with little signs at the major intersections (who most people ignore since they cannot give out tickets - there is no court and no licensing system for drivers). Driving through the city is a thrill a minute - we've had a few fender benders and nailed a guy with our mirror the other day." —Jeff

JEFFREY M. NELSON, PSC Attorney, is currently deployed in Kabul, Afghanistan. As a Colonel in the NATIONAL GUARD, Jeff has been on active duty since November, 2004. Since his deployment, Jeff has assumed many different roles in Afghanistan. Initially, Jeff worked directly for the Ambassador at the U.S. EMBASSY in Kabul where he was responsible for setting up a directorate of the civilian and military offices. In January, 2005, Jeff was reassigned to the OFFICE OF MILITARY COOPERATION to serve as *Director of the Afghan National Police Training Program*. He is now working for the AFGHAN RECONSTRUCTION GROUP's Justice Sector. In his position in the ARG's Justice Sector, Jeff is working on proposed legislation and regulations of the Afghan laws and working with the interested Afghan ministries for passage of legislation by the Afghan's Cabinet. Additionally, Jeff is also providing contract review and oversight of several communications and infrastructure contracts and projects in Afghanistan.

Jeff has met with the Minister of Communications for Afghanistan, Minister Sangeen, in regards to pursuing a partnership with the South Carolina Public Service Commission. The program is funded by the U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Jeff's interest in this endeavor would be to aid in the establishment of regulatory bodies as well as the laws and regulations of Afghanistan.

Jeff is involved with humanitarian efforts and has had many, many visits to the Refugee camps and hospitals of Afghanistan.

In his position in Afghanistan, Jeff has had the opportunity to meet with many dignitaries, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Senator Lindsey Graham.

— Hope Adams

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